

# NCOs and Joint Training

By CSM John H. Holden, Jr

**A**s our Army continues to "right size" and as our missions increase, joint training on land, sea and air will make our support to the war fighting commanders-in-chief (CINCs) more effective. Interoperability training for NCOs must and will become increasingly important in the 21st century. Joint training undoubtedly will improve military effectiveness, reduce cost, increase the overall readiness of our military force and foster greater service interoperability throughout all military operations.

We go forward into the future with a larger mission—that of ambassadors—and as an example for all of the countries who want to become a part of NATO or to join in a partnership for peace. As our country continues to provide world leadership, it's apparent that the NCO Corps will become the trainer and role model for these partners.

Despite 21st-century high technology and re-defined missions, the basic theme of leadership for NCOs remains unchanged. We will still be expected to be proficient in our leadership skills and tactical and technical abilities. Our leaders have given us the challenge to help change the very nature of how future battles and wars will be fought.

The digitization of the battlefield now allows for simultaneous sharing of all kinds of information. To support the warfighting CINCs, it's critical that NCOs understand and take on the challenge of learning more about our sister services and related jobs, for we will play a major role in all future interoperability missions.

The NCO leadership and the soldiers they lead are the foundation of military readiness. Today's military mission is characterized by the use of sophisticated technology and an increased rate of deployment and family separation. These developments demand highly qualified, well-trained and motivated soldiers. As NCOs, we must recommend new and innovative techniques, training methods and tactics relevant to

the operational situation that is anticipated.

It's no secret that battles are decided by individuals and teamwork. Soldiers must know basic soldiering skills. They must know their individual weapons and equipment. They must be able to hit what they aim at and operate their technical machines. Keeping a battle focus, concentrating on those things the soldiers and the unit must do well, allows units to train on those areas that are most important in combat.

The most important ingredient of a winning organization—small or large—is teamwork. As seen in recent deployments, this is crucial for a force projection Army because the mission probably will not be well defined. NCOs have direct responsibility for building cohesive teams through vigorous, relevant and tough training.

Staying trained and ready requires constant reevaluation of missions and the ways to best accomplish them. We can't

stand still. We must eliminate deficiencies, use every available opportunity to train and constantly assess our ability to serve as a combat force. Staying ahead of any threat, any situation, any opponent—that's what we're all about. Our Army exists to fight our nation's wars decisively. Maintaining excellence in training allows us to keep the warfighting edge. Battle-focused training develops the discipline, toughness, teamwork and trust vital to succeed in battle. And, if need be, in operations other

than war if that is where our country calls. As NCOs, we have the privilege of leading the finest soldiers in the world. They deserve the best possible leadership we can provide. We must respond to this challenge with selfless dedication and genuine concern for our soldiers and our country. ■

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